

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 290629Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5633
USDOC WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 0729

USDOC FOR CAGNE/HALE AND BEHR; SAD/GOOTENBURG

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BEXP, EWWT, TS
SUBJECT: TSS PORT DEVELOPMENT: TUNIS

1. SUMMARY

PRESENTATION BY TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT AND KNOWLEDGEABLE SEMINAR TEAM HAD MAJOR IMPACT ON TUNSIAN PORT OFFICIALS WHICH SHOULD RESULT IN GREATER OPENNESS TO U.S. PORT METHODS AND EQUIPMENT. BOTH SUBSTANTIALLY AND ADMINISTRATIVELY, SEMINAR WENT EXTREMELY WELL WITH MINIMUM OF HITCHES. ALL MISSION MEMBERS WERE PLEASED WITH COMMERCIAL CONTACTS, AND POSSIBLE \$1 MILLION SALE MAY RESULT DIRECTLY FROM SEMINAR. FOLLOW-UP BY PARTICIPATING COMPANIES, INCLUDING POSSIBLE VISITS BY TUNISIAN OFFICIALS TO U.S. PORTS, IMPORTANT TO CEMENT THESE GAINS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A HARD-HITTING, EFFECTIVE AND WELL RECEIVED SEMINAR PROGRAM, SUBJECT MISSION HAS CAUSED GOT PORT OFFICIALS TO RETHINK THEIR PREVIOUS OPPOSITION TO CONTAINERIZATION IN TUNISIA'S PORTS AND TO LOOK BEYOND COMPETING MEDITERRANEAN (I.E., FRENCH) PORTS FOR ADVICE AND CONSULTANTS. ONE MISSION MEMBER FELT THAT BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN TUNISIAN NATIONAL OFFICE OF PORTS (OPNT)
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HAS CHANGED ON QUESTION OF CONTAINERS AS DIRECT RESULT OF THIS SEMINAR. EMPHASIS BY GROUP ON EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONS IN MODERN U.S. PORTS HAD MAJOR IMPACT ON SEMINAR ATTENDEES.

3. ON AFTERNOON OF ARRIVAL (JAN. 19), SEMINAR TEAM AND OPNT OFFICIALS INITIATED INTERPLY THAT WAS TO CHARACTERIZE ENTIRE VISIT. GROUP CALL ON EZZEDINE ABBASSI, PRESIDENT DIRECTOR GENERAL,

NATIONAL OFFICE OF PORTS AND STAFF QUICKLY TURNED INTO SPIRITED DISCUSSION OF TUNISIA'S PORT NEEDS, AND THE COUNTRY'S CONTINUING DEPENDENCE ON FRANCE FOR ADVICE AND TECHNOLOGY AND ON FRENCH PORTS FOR TRANS-SHIPMENT OF TUNISIA'S INTERCONTINENTAL TRADE. TOUR OF TUNIS/GOULETTE PORT FOLLOWED DURING WHICH MISSION MEMBERS HAD OPPORTUNITY TO EVALUATE ITS OPERATIONS, METHODS AND EQUIPMENT.

4. DURING SEMINAR AND SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS, MISSION MEMBERS WERE ABLE TO TAILOR THEIR REMARKS TO TUNISIA'S NEEDS AND PURCHASE PLANS BASED ON INFORMATION GATHERED FROM PORT TOUR, AS WELL AS FROM EMBASSY-PREPARED MARKET SURVEY ON TUNISIAN PORTS WHICH WAS DISTRIBUTED DURING BRIEFING ON EVENING OF JANUARY 19.

5. SEMINAR OPENED ON JANUARY 20 BY AMBASSADOR AND MR. ALI HICHERI REPRESENTING THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION. OVER 50 KEY GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES WERE IN ATTENDANCE. ONE INDICATION OF STRONG AUDIENCE INTEREST: NOONE MADE A MOVE TO LEAVE WHEN AFTERNOON PRESENTATION RAN NEARLY AN HOUR OVER SCHEDULE. IN ADDITION TO HICHERI, WHO ATTENDED ENTIRE SEMINAR, ATTENDEES INCLUDED AZZEDDINE ABASSI, PDG OF OPNT, ALOUANI SF AT, NO. 2 AT OPNT; NOUREDDINE NAANAA, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, IPNT; MOKDAD BANNOUR, OF THE MERCHANT MARINE DIRECTORATE; MR. MONCEF BEN MENA, DIRECTOR OF THE PORTE OF BIZERTE; ABDALLAH SMIDA, DIRECTOR OF THE PORTE OF SOUSSE; MONGI KLAA, DIRECTOR OF THE PORT OF TUNIS/GOULETTE AND MOHAMED CHEMLI, DIRECTOR OF FISHERIES. DISCUSSION OF CONTAINERIZATION AND TUNISIAN/FRENCH PORT TIES WHICH BEGAN JANUARY 19, CONTINUED DURING Q & A SESSIONS.

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FILMS AND SLIDES ACCOMPANYING PRESENTATIONS PROVED POPULAR.

6. BUFFET RECEPTION HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR AT RESIDENCE EXTREMELY WELL ATTENDED WITH NEARLY ALL SEMINAR ATTENDEES PRESENT, INCLUDING THOSE LISTED ABOVE. MISSION MEMBERS MADE SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT CONTACTS DURING RECEPTION.

7. OPNT'S CONTEMPLATED PURCHASE OF A LARGE FLOATING CRANE, NOTED IN MARKET SURVEY, PROMPTED MISSION CHAIRMAN SOULES TO MAKE STRONG CASE AGAINST FLOATING CRANE ON BASIS OF ITS HIGH INITIAL COST AND INEFFICIENT OPERATIONS. ABASSI AND KLAA ARE RECONSIDERING THE PURCHASE, AND UNDERTOOK FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH HARNISCHFEGGER REPRESENTATIVE MORGAN ON ADVANTAGES OF MOBILE DOCKSIDE CRANES. A MILLION DOLLAR ORDER FOR HARNISCHFEGGER IS POSSIBLE.

8. OTHER MISSION MEMBERS WERE SATISFIED THAT FRUITFUL CONTACTS HAD BEEN MADE WHICH COULD LEAD TO LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP. HARRIS HAS IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL JOINT-VENTURE PARTNER

FOR GENERAL ENGINEERING/CONSULTING WITH TUNISIA; SPERRY HAS
BEGUN DISCUSSIONS WITH TEHNICALLY QUALIFIED POTENTIAL AGENT/
DISTRIBUTORS; PACECO FEELS TIDE HAS TURNED IN CONTAINERIZATION
AND SEES BUSINESS POTENTIAL IN FIVE YEAR TIME FRAME. LAST MIN-
UTE SUBSTITUTE FOR ELLICOTT WHTTOOOD ADDITION TO GROUP (PARTI-
CULARLY AS HE IS NATIVE FRENCH SPEAKER), AND RENEWED KEY CON-
TACTS IN OPNT. EACH MISSION MEMBERS HAD THREE TO FIVE IN-
DIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS ON JAN 21 AND 22; MOST APPOINTMENTS RE-
SULTED FROMSIMINAR PRESENTATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS
AT RECEPTION. (TUNISIAN OFFICIALS AND BUSINESSMEN ARE RELUCTANT
TO SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS IN ADVANCE.)

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9. ON JANUARY 21, CHAIRMAN SOULES, ACCOMPANIED BY COMMERCIAL
COUNSELOR MONTGOMERY PAID COURTESY CALL ON ABDELHAMID SASSI,
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS. ONCE AGAIN, COURTESY
VISIT TURNED INTO EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION OF THE TUNISIAN PORT
SITUATION AND TUNISIA'S MID AND LONG TERM NEEDS. VISIT LASTED
ONE AND A HALF HOURS AND SASSI INDICATED STRONG SYMPATHY WITH
SOULES' VIEWS BUT POINTED OUT THAT HIS IDEAS WOULD HAVE TO BE
FURTHER EXPLORED WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.
SASSI EMPHASIZED THAT HE AND SOULES WERE BASICALLY LIKE-MINDED
AND THANKED SOULES FOR PROVIDING A BROAD NEW PERSPECTIVE. SASSI
THEN INVITED SOULES TO ATTEND COMMISSIONING OF NEW GERMAN BUILT
TUNISIAN RO-RO VESSEL ON JANUARY 22 EVENING PRESIDED OVER BY
PRIME MINISTER. SOULES REGRETFULLY DECLINED AS MISSION SCHEDULED
TO LEAVE AT THAT TIME AND LATER CONNECTION TO ALGIERS WAS
IMPOSSIBLE TO ARRANGE.

10. PUBLICITY; SEMINAR RECEIVED MEDIA COVERAGE THROUGHOUT ITS STAY IN TUNIS. RADIO TUNIS REPORTED ARRIVAL OF MISSION AND SEMINAR SCHEDULE JANUARY 20. DAILY PAPERS, LA PRESSE (FRENCH), AS-SABAH AND AL-AMAL (ARABIC), RAN ARTICLES COVERING SEMINAR ON JANUARY 21. AL-AMAL, CONDUCTED INTERVIEW WITH SOULES MORNING OF JANUARY 21, AND RAN STORIES WEEKEND OF JANUARY 22/
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23. WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE DIALOGUE WILL RUN STORY ON SEMINAR BASED ON PREPARED PRESENTATIONS. EXTENSIVE PHOTO COVERAGE OF ARRIVAL, PORT VISIT, SEMINAR, AND PRESENTATION OF PEACE AND COMMERCE MEDAL TO ABASSI WAS PROVIDED BY USIS TUNIS. BEHR CARRYING CONTACT PRINTS AND NEGATIVES.

11. NOW THAT INTEREST OF TUNISIAN PORT COMMUNITY IS PIQUED, ESSENTIAL THAT PARTICIPATING COMPANIES FOLLOW UP ON THEIR INITIAL CONTACTS TO REMIND TUNISIANS OF TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE FROM U.S. AND PROVIDE COUNTERWEIGHT FOR HEAVY INFLUENCE FROM TRADITIONAL SUPPLIERS. ALL POSSIBILITIES, GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE, TO ARRANGE VISITS FOR TUNISIAN OFFICIALS TO U.S. PORTS-- ESPECIALLY TO PROGRESSIVE SMALLER PORTS OPERATED BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES--SHOULD BE EXPLORED.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

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